Ms Sandra Lang
Deputy Minister
Ontario Ministry of Health
Queen's Park, Toronto

June 9, 1998

Att: Catherine Kerr

Dear Ms Lang,

In 1989, three centuries of literature and generations of experience convinced a few others to join me in asking the Psychiatric Hospitals Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Health about one of the high risk groups being abused because of attitudes towards persons with sensitivities. The Ontario NDP health critic and the legal advisor for the Psychiatric Patient Advocacy Office joined me in asking if persons with central nervous system symptoms caused by sensitivities were being identified in the province's ten owned and operated psychiatric hospitals, and throughout Ontario's mental health community.

The attached response from the Branch came on July 12th, 1989. It was that they were aware of sensitivities, and that every patient received a thorough assessment for possible physical cause when admitted. Representatives of psychiatric survivor organizations strongly dispute both statements.

Since 1989 I and others have repeatedly asked the Branch to indicate if they have identified ANY persons in the psychiatric system whose problems are caused by any form of environmental sensitivities. The response is that none has been identified, in a total patient population involving 4,467 beds (plus turnover during seven years.)

Documents received yesterday under Freedom of Information legislation indicate 65 inpatient suicides in nine of those ten hospitals in the seven years following their assertion that they knew about sensitivities, and that patients were given a thorough physical exam. Although Lakehead didn't know how many suicides there had been in their hospital, an average would be one suicide per year in each hospital.

Were any of the persons who committed suicide in those hospitals assessed for environmental sensitivities, using the existing mainstream methods that were identified by the blue ribbon panel of Ontario teaching hospital physicians appointed by health minister Keith Norton to do so in 1984.?

There is no reason to believe that the incidence of sensitivities would be lower in psych patients than it is in the population as a whole. Esitmates of the percentage of the population who experience disability because of sensitivities range from 3 to 30 per cent. (There is no cutoff point.) In fact it is remarkable that some psychiatric groups have much higher incidences of allergy, for instance, than does the general population.

The science and experience have been around for generations, since 1700 according to the attached article from a 1980 Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa. As recognized by the Executive Director of the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges, there is a problem with attitude. He once said, while discussing sensitivities, "Sometimes attitude problems are hidden behind a presumed lack of science".

And perhaps, by some parties, there's just a bit of deceit.

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